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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5890  
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE  
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RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0346  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0392  
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 0548  
RUEHBAD/AMCONSUL PERTH 0356  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NOUAKCHOTT 001208

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/02/2016  
TAGS: [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [EAID](#) [KPAO](#) [MR](#)  
SUBJECT: ELECTORAL COMMISSION BRIEFS EMBASSIES ON ELECTORAL  
PREPARATIONS

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 1193

Classified By: CDA Steven Koutsis, Reasons 1.4(b)(d)

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(C) Summary  
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-- The National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) told western diplomats that it had not seen any evidence that the government attempted to influence the candidate registration process (reftel).

-- "CENI will work closely with the Ministry of Interior to ensure that the registration process is transparent," CENI president Babamine told attendees.

-- CENI estimates that about 70,000 new voters will be registered in the September supplementary census.

-- 1,264 candidate lists were submitted for November's municipal council elections, with 374 independent lists and 890 political party lists. The government has until October 10 to "verify" the candidate lists.

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(C) Comments  
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-- We repeatedly expressed concern both for the neutrality of the government and the independence of CENI, saying that CENI needed to take the lead in ensuring the transparency of the transition and the neutrality of the government.

-- While the 70,000 figure is not as high as we would have hoped, it does increase total registration by 7 pct, not an insignificant number.

End Summary and Comments.

11. (U) The National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) met with chiefs of the U.S., French, Spanish, German, EU and UN missions September 28 to discuss preparations for the municipal and legislative elections set for November 19.

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CENI UPDATE  
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¶2. (C) CENI president Cheikh Sid'Ahmed Ould Babamine told attendees that CENI "acted quickly" following recent reports of the government's "intervention into the electoral process (reftel)...in order to reaffirm the government's neutrality."

"We sent Vall a letter asking for clarification of their stance vis-a-vis neutrality, and raised the issue in our weekly meeting with the Minister of Interior," Babamine said.

He added that CENI has not seen any evidence to indicate that the government was in fact attempting to influence the candidate registration process (reftel), and noted that the government publicly reaffirmed its neutrality.

¶3. (C) Responding to attendees' concerns regarding potential government influence in candidate registrations, Babamine said "CENI will work closely with the Ministry of Interior to ensure that the registration process is transparent." One potential problem foreseen by CENI was the issuance of registration receipts to candidates who did not submit complete (and valid) registration applications. These would-be candidates were issued receipts for their registration, but will likely not be added to the ballot due to incomplete applications.

¶4. (U) Note: Candidate registration figures for November's municipal council elections were released by the Ministry of Interior September 30. According to the government's official figures, 1,264 candidate lists were submitted for Mauritania's 216 communes, with 374 (30%) coming from independent candidates, and 890 (70%) coming from 25 political parties and 22 political party coalitions. The Ministry has until October 10 to "verify" the candidate lists. End Note.

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¶5. (C) Babamine said that currently 68,000 additional names had been added to the voter lists from September's supplemental voter registration drive, and he estimated that in total between 70,000 and 75,000 names would be added. CENI members estimated that as many as 300,000 people could have been registered during the drive.

¶6. (C) Babamine said CENI was currently talking to the government about allowing national observers to participate in election observations (only political parties were allowed to observe last June's referendum). Various attendees including the UN Resident Representative Cecile Molinier stressed the need for local election observers, adding "the EU will be sending their election observation mission on Tuesday October 3, but just as important will be the active role of Mauritanian pole watchers." Babamine concluded the topic by saying "I have recently spoken to the government on the importance of national observers and I hope and believe they will do this."

¶7. (C) Attendees expressed concern both for the neutrality of the government and the independence of CENI. Babamine said "CENI will continue to work as an independent player in the transition...reporting on both the positive and negative aspects of the government's work."  
Koutsis